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THE CONDEMNATION OF THE "ACTION FRANÇAISE"

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"ACTION FRANÇAISE"

Edited by

LEO WARD.

"This great attempt to de-Christianise Catholicism could not but end in failure."

Mercure de France, April 1st, 1927.

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PREFACE

THE condemnation of the *Action Française* has been described as the most severe disciplinary act of the Holy See in modern times. It has been widely criticised in this country as an act of tyranny and an interference with political liberties. It is interesting to note that these criticisms have been usually made by writers who are proud to call themselves Protestants, especially in view of the extreme contempt and aversion always displayed by the *Action Française* for the churches of the Reformation, of whom M. Maurras has even said that "in the great sense of the word (they are) not human." ("Le Dilemme de Marc Sangnier," p. 21.) It is curious, also, to note that these critics are for the most part believers in constitutional methods and opponents of violence and revolution, whereas the overthrow of the French Republic by violent means has been advocated by the *Action Française* throughout most of the years of its existence.

It has been suggested that a translation of some of the documents referring to this subject* would be of interest to the readers of the Twelvepenny Series while awaiting a fuller treatment of it in a larger work. I have added as an Introduction a sketch of the movement of *Action Française* which I wrote for the January number of *The Month*. It is published here with the kind permission of the Editor of that review.

L. W.

* Most of these translations are my own. A few, however, are taken from articles published in the American "Catholic World."

I

THE CATHOLIC ASPECT OF THE "ACTION FRANÇAISE." *

In order to understand the motives which have prompted the condemnation of the movement known as the *Action Française* it is necessary to recall the larger religious and social movement in which it has played so prominent and influential a part. To a foreigner the Catholic revival in France appears to possess an almost paradoxical character. It has been estimated by a French agnostic that three-quarters, if not four-fifths, of the French *bourgeoisie* are to-day Catholics; whereas the vast mass of the poor, and especially of the peasantry, are practical agnostics with a strong dislike of the Church. Such a situation (even allowing for exaggerations) is truly astonishing to Catholics who are not Frenchmen. In most countries the peasantry tend to be religious, and in France itself there are still districts where the great bulk of the people go to Mass. Moreover the French *bourgeoisie* was notoriously regarded as unbelieving and "Voltairian" during the greater part of the nineteenth century.

What has caused this change?

In the first place there has undoubtedly been a

* This introductory study was published in *The Month* (Jan. 1928) and is reprinted by the Editor's permission.

remarkable revival of religion in the universities and among the professional classes. I have heard it maintained that the majority of medical students, for instance, are now practising Catholics. But there is also a reason which appears difficult for a foreigner to grasp, but which has undoubtedly operated in favour of the Church among the upper and middle classes while it has contributed to the further alienation of the masses.

The Catholic Church in France is popularly regarded as a standing protest against the French Revolution and its effects and, therefore, a bulwark against Revolutions in the future. It is still associated with the *ancien régime* in the eyes of the masses, although to-day the vast majority of Catholics have accepted the Republic. The Church is, therefore, thought of (almost primarily) as anti-democratic by the majority of the people.

It is true that the Holy See has again and again tried to extricate the Church from this paradoxical situation. Catholicism can flourish under any form of Government which is not actually opposed to the moral law. But a considerable section of French Catholics have always refused to accept any other than a royalist *régime*, and when the *concordat* was signed between the Pope and Napoleon a number of families went into schism and founded "la petite église."* When Leo XIII appealed to Catholics to join in the life of the Re-

* See *The Month*, Dec. 1919: "A Moribund Schism," by the Comtesse de Courson.

public (without, however, asking them to abandon their royalist opinions) the outcry was enormous. When Pius X repeated his exhortation it was widely said that he spoke " officially " but was privately anxious for the overthrow of the Republic. Pope Pius X protested against such rumours which, he said, " we denounce with all our indignation as being absolutely false."

The French Royalists had, however, by now found a new and formidable leader in the person of M. Charles Maurras. M. Maurras was an unbeliever who had contrasted " Catholicism," which he admired as essentially monarchical, with " Christianity," which had taught the working man the dangerous doctrine that he had an immortal soul. The Catholic Church had captured Christianity and rendered it harmless ; it had set the *Magnificat* to a splendid chant which, he said, " attenuates its poison " (" Chemin de Paradis," p. XXIX). M. Maurras was one of the principal writers in a review called the *Action Française*, which was religiously agnostic and politically nationalist and which he had managed to inspire with his Royalist ideals. But finding that the Royalist tradition was strong only among the Catholics, M. Maurras ceased to develop his anti-Christian theories in public, though he did not withdraw them.* (They can be studied in such a book

* Fresh editions of his most anti-Christian books have continued to be published, even to within the last few months, with certain deletions. The publication of unexpurgated editions for " bibliophiles " is a yet clearer proof that M. Maurras' opinions remain unchanged.

as Abbé Pierre's *Avec Nietzsche à l'assaut du Christianisme*). His aim henceforth was to become the leader of the French Catholic Royalists. His extraordinarily subtle and passionate eloquence was now devoted to defending the Catholic Church against democratic anti-clericals. Splendid pictures of the Church as the home of order, of tradition and of authority fascinated thousands of Catholics who did not realise how thoroughly their author had thought out his anti-Christian interpretation of Catholicism. All their hereditary prejudices were confirmed by this unbeliever, whose conversion to the Faith was confidently anticipated: anti-Republicanism, anti-Modernism and attacks on Freemasonry seemed to justify the confidence of Catholics in their new chief. But his supreme qualification appeared in his truly ferocious campaigns against the Prussian and the Jew. It was on this *terrain* especially that the *Action Française* won first the esteem, then the trustful alliance and finally the enthusiastic obedience of many thousands of French Catholics of the upper and middle classes.

The *Action Française* first leapt into fame in the campaign against Dreyfus. It will be remembered that Dreyfus was a Jewish officer in the French Army. He was accused of betraying military secrets to Germany, was convicted by court-martial and exiled to Devil's Island. But his friends, and the Jews in general, being convinced that another and not he was the traitor, obtained a re-trial. Again he was condemned,

but was pardoned by the President of the Republic. In 1906 the Supreme Court, having ascertained that certain important evidence had not been presented to the military judges or to the supreme court itself, annulled the second sentence of the court-martial.

The great majority of French Catholics believed that Dreyfus was guilty, although a small minority, forming a society called the Catholic Association for the Defence of Justice, regarded him as falsely accused. So vehement, indeed, did Catholic opinion become during the many years of this "affair" that any Catholic who doubted the guilt of Dreyfus was regarded as "suspect" by his fellows. A large body of opinion, however, was inclined to believe that he was guilty, but regarded the evidence against him as insufficient. In any case they regretted the identification of Catholicism with one view of the facts. Pope Leo XIII is believed to have shared this regret. The violence of the Catholic press became so great that an Irish lady (who had devoted her whole life to working for the Church) told me that to read *La Croix* during those years was a positive temptation against her faith; while a distinguished French priest gave it as his opinion that the whole wave of anti-clerical feeling in France was caused by the violence of the campaign against Dreyfus. Dreyfus was regarded by the Radicals as a martyr, and this wave of anti-clerical feeling turned all the subsequent French elections against the Church. According to Abbé Lugan the anti-clerical laws could never

have been passed if the Church had not been associated with what was called " the persecution of Dreyfus."

But though the Catholic papers like *La Croix* may have exhibited an un-Christian attitude towards Jews and Radicals they were as milk and water compared with their new ally, the *Action Française.*

The *Action Française,* whose principal directors, then as now, were atheists, soon became the spear-head of the Catholic (or Conservative) cause. A young journalist called Léon Daudet, whose capacity for strong language stands without rival in the history of letters, had recently declared himself a convert to Catholicism. M. Maurras soon enlisted his services in the great campaign. Henceforth it could be said that one of the editors of the *Action Française* was a Catholic, and the recruitment of Catholics to the movement advanced by leaps and bounds.

But M. Maurras himself, even more than M. Daudet, was the magnet which attracted Catholic opinion. Here was an unbeliever who spoke of the Catholic Church with an enthusiasm and an eloquence unrivalled by her own children. Whatever the Catholic Press could say in praise of authority the *Action Française* would say with greater eloquence ; whatever its denunciation of revolutions or Jewish conspiracies or the increasing anti-clerical legislation was said with greater force by M. Maurras. Moreover, as time went on M. Maurras and his paper formed a sort of Inqui-

sition for denouncing unsound Catholics. Any priest who accepted the Republic was subjected to the most searching criticism. Could anything of unsound tendency be found in his sermons or writings he was denounced as a Modernist. As Cardinal Bourne has lately told us, the *Action Française* went so far as to try and influence the appointment of bishops by the most dishonourable means. As years went by, anyone who opposed their politics was regarded by many of his fellow Catholics as tainted with Modernism. It was forgotten by many that five out of the six principal directors of the movement were convinced atheists.

It must not, of course, be forgotten that the *numerical* strength of the *Action Française* was comparatively small.* The movement was dangerous because it instilled a Pagan spirit into some thousands of Catholic youths—a spirit of real national and class hatred—because it created an atmosphere of suspicion among Catholics themselves, and because its efforts were directed to influencing the leaders of the laity and even an important section of the clergy.

It is important, also, to notice that the outspoken statement of anti-Christian and anti-moral principles (statements which are as offensive as anything in Voltaire) belongs mostly to the earlier stages of the movement. But even as late as 1908 an

* The sale of the paper never exceeded 65,000, whereas the Catholic *Echo de Paris* sells over 800,000, and the definitely ecclesiastical paper, *La Croix*, over 300,000.

indiscreet writer in the paper suggested that they ought to "buy consciences, buy women, buy treason" (March 1st, 1908). But by that time the number of Catholic readers was so great that their protests called forth from M. Maurras the explanation that of course "one only buys what is for sale." Moreover, such passages were rare; while the appeals to violence, being always directed against Jews or Communists, were excused and even regarded by some as a useful result of having non-Christian allies in the good cause.

As we shall see, the representations of many bishops and Catholic leaders were already beginning to make Rome aware of the danger of a movement in which the leaders were mostly atheists and the followers mostly Catholics. These representations led to the first condemnation by Pius X. in 1914 and ultimately to the final prohibitions issued by the present Pope. But it must be realised that the *Action Française* seemed to stand on very strong ground. It appeared as a movement for order and authority and patriotism. As such it was regarded as a political rather than a religious movement, and a good political movement at that. "Integral Nationalism" was its watchword and, as M. Maurras declared, in his *Programme* of 1899: "A true nationalist places his country above all things else. He conceives, discusses and resolves all problems in the light of their connection with the interests of the nation." He further argued that "genuine nationalism demands a monarchy, traditional, hereditary, non-

parliamentary." Only an hereditary King would put the nation first, in place of party or financial considerations, since the nation belonged to him. A most interesting, and in many ways convincing, defence of the Royalist thesis is made in the brilliant "History of France," by M. Maurras' disciple, Jacques Bainville.

But the school of *Action Française* was more than a political party. Even politically it was a "school" rather than a party. (I do not think it has ever succeeded in having more than two or three of its representatives elected for the Chamber.) But its conception of French civilisation was more than a merely political one. Historic France is for M. Maurras the heir of Greek intelligence and Roman law. Christianity on the other hand is an alien growth in the Graeco-Roman world. But, fortunately, the Roman Empire was not conquered by Christianity. It captured Christianity and converted it into a grand Pagan religion called Catholicism: the pillar of order, government and tradition, the enemy of democracy and the French Revolution.

"Men who do not agree upon the question as to whether Catholicism is true recognise that it is good," wrote Maurras, and "one might take part in the fight against those religious influences (of democratic tendency) that are hostile to Catholicism."

Thus the *Action Française* despised all forms of subjectivism and Protestantism and easily discerned tendencies towards these among unsuspecting

Catholics. Maurras was genuinely shocked by the democratic politics of many Catholics in countries like Germany, Italy, America and Australia. He played a prominent part in the campaign against the French Catholic democratic movement known as the "Sillon." The "Sillon" foolishly attempted to identify Catholicism with democratic forms of government and such an exclusive doctrine was ultimately condemned by Rome. But the movement was in many ways deeply religious, as was proved by its immediate submission to the judgment of the Holy See; and it suffered from the most unfair attacks in the *Action Française* and also in *La Croix* (from the pen of a priest who afterwards left the Church). The condemnation of the "Sillon" was regarded by the *Action Française* as a great victory for its "Catholic" policy, and when the Encyclical against Modernism was published, M. Vaugeois (the founder of the *Action Française*) expressed his joy by quoting almost blasphemously the words used by Pascal in his secret "memorial" to describe his ecstasy in prayer, "Joie! joie! feu de ciel!"

The Catholic attack on the *Action Française* began in *Le Correspondant* for December 25th, 1905. But its author, M. Fidao, was smothered with abuse and his Italian name and descent were regarded as sufficient evidence of an anti-French conspiracy. In 1909 Abbé Lugan published "L'Action Française et l'Idée Chretienne;" and in 1910 appeared Abbé Pierre's "Avec Nietzsche à l'assaut du Christianisme," while Père

Laberthonnière's "Positivisme et Catholicisme" (in 1911) contains a full catalogue of the most lurid passages from the *Action Française* and the works of its principal promoters.

All the opponents of the *Action Française* were accused of unorthodoxy (in some cases, presumably, with justice) and as Mgr. Guillibert (who had been Maurras' tutor) confided to the Pope in 1911: "one thinks twice before speaking when one will be decried as 'suspect' the next day." Moreover, so large a part of the French aristocracy had joined the movement that any priest who opposed it was liable to heavy financial loss (and the French priesthood was already in an almost starving condition). Moreover, many priests and even Bishops believed that M. Maurras was soon going to succeed in restoring the King and the Church, and his constant laudations of the Church and of the Holy See were interpreted in a believing and a Christian sense. Indeed, whenever the question of a condemnation of the *Action Française* was discussed it was argued that the Holy See could not condemn a primarily political movement whose leaders were not Catholics and also that M. Maurras' conversion was only a matter of time.

The evil effects of the movement were, however, becoming daily more evident. Catholic works for social betterment, like the *Semaines Sociales*, were continually bombarded with abuse, and Catholics were bidden to put "politics first" in the restoration of the Church: that is, in the

restoration of a king by means of a *coup-d'état* and the promotion of M. Marraus as his efficient minister and Dictator. Moreover, the smashing of windows and even the shooting of Communists often has a disturbing effect on the moral judgment. As Mgr. Guillibert expressed it in 1911, "les exemples de defection morale ont été nombreux." The young men who joined it as a militant Catholic movement often came to put politics before religion, while close association with men who boasted of being "Catholic Atheists," and glorified the moral outlook of Pagan antiquity, often damaged the quality of their religion. The Catholics were indeed in a majority, but the unbelievers were the real leaders. As the *Action Française* itself expressed it, "the unbelieving 'libertins,' thanks to Maurras and some of his friends, knew very well how to overcome the handicap of numerical inferiority."

Episcopal protests became more numerous. In 1910 Mgr. Péchenard, Bishop of Soissons, wrote a strong letter to Abbé Pierre in praise of his book against the *Action Française*. He also made various representations in Rome, where the more widespread dangers of Modernism were occupying the attention of the Holy See. In 1913 Mgr. Mignot, the Archbishop of Albi, denounced the idea that Catholics and Atheists could unite in advocating theoretical conclusions of authority, etc., based on absolutely contradictory moral principles. In the same year the Bishop of Nice wrote a pastoral letter in which he denounced

the "return to pagan morals and mentality," while the Bishop of Luçon addressed his priests on the same subject: "Have what opinions you like. Be royalists, or be republicans, I say nothing about that. But do not give your allegiance to the *Action Française*." But the most important denunciation was that made privately in a letter to the Pope by Mgr. Guillibert, Bishop of Frejus, Maurras' former master. It is a complete study of the practical effects of the *Action Française*.*

It is, perhaps, providential that Pius X was persuaded to postpone the publication of his decree condemning the *Action Française*, signed a few months before the war broke out. The theory that the Papacy was the secret ally of Germany † would have been exploited with overwhelming effect by a paper which became of real national importance during the war, when it abandoned the idea of overthrowing the Republic, and which has even now managed to convince thousands of people that its final condemnation is due to German influence.

But during the war further representations were made by French Bishops regarding the paganising influence of the movement; and the eloquent appeal of the Archbishop of Albi to Pope Benedict XV (expressing his belief in the existence of a secret society of Catholics and "Catholic-Atheists"

* See translation of this letter, p. 38.

† In striking contrast with Ludendorf's denunciation of the "French Pope."

for the denunciation of democrats as "suspect" to the ecclesiastical authorities) ensured his ratification of the condemnation, though not its immediate publication.* The pastoral letter of Mgr. de Ligonnès, the Royalist Bishop of Rodez (1924), is equally emphatic.

The belief of certain eminent French prelates in the imminent conversion of Maurras appears to have been the determining factor in the postponement of the condemnation in January, 1914. The political passions roused by the war undoubtedly influenced Benedict XV to its further postponement. The great increase of its influence especially in Belgium (where Maurras was voted to be the greatest modern thinker by the Catholic undergraduates of Louvain University) compelled the present Pope to act, first by denunciation and afterwards (in view of the organised rebellion) by forbidding the paper and the League to all Catholics, so long as its present directors remain in control.

If it be asked what exactly are the principles condemned in the *Action Française* it might be answered that they are four in particular:—

(1) The idea that to be a good Catholic it is necessary to be a good royalist.

(2) That it is lawful to work even for a good end "by all kinds of means"; "par tous les moyens."

* The documents of the secret society were brought to light by the *Mouvement* in 1923.

(3) That Catholics may work for the restoration of the Church under the direction of leaders who believe that the supreme *mission* of the Church is to undo the effects of Christianity.

(4) A Pagan conception of nationalism and the State similar to that reproved by the Pope in the case of some Italian thinkers.

Above all the Church condemns a spirit of hatred and violence, which is utterly opposed to the supernatural end for which she exists. The deeds of violence inspired by the *Action Française* have multiplied since the war and have even sometimes been turned against the Church since the Condemnation.

But it is equally important to remember what is *not* condemned. Royalism is not condemned, as the Pope has continually explained. As Mr. Charles Petrie, writing in the *English Review*, has reminded us, "the *Action Française* by no means includes all those who hope for a restoration of the monarchy. None of the Royalist Senators and Deputies are numbered among its members, and in many monarchist circles both its programme and its methods are regarded with suspicion." (December, 1927.)

Still less does the condemnation in any way weaken the condemnation of what have been described as "errors of the left"; and the Syllabus, the condemnation of "The Sillon," and the Encyclical against Modernism are obviously as binding as before! As the Archbishop of

Chambéry observes in a letter to one of the readers of the *Action Française*: "The Syllabus is not revoked by the condemnation of the *Action Française*. Sillonisme remains the object of the Church's reprobation pronounced by Pius X as well as the Modernism from which it is derived."

Where, then, lies the essential heresy of the *Action Française?* It is surely found in the new and equivocal meaning attached to such words as Order and Authority.

For the Church, Christian society exists for the glory of God and the incorporation of souls with Christ. A school of thought which says "you may believe in God's existence or deny it, so long as you work with us for the restoration of order and of the Church as the guardian of order" must necessarily win her condemnation. The "order" conceived of by the Church is the disposing of all things towards their end, which is the glory of God and His reign of charity. If the end is changed or regarded as indifferent, the conception of "order" will be a false one. The practical paganism inspired by the *Action Française* was due to its false objective. It was no use saying "unite our efforts for the good of our country" when the parties concerned were fundamentally divided as to what *was* the good of their country. Both might agree that aristocracy (for instance) was a good thing. But the Catholic must regard aristocracy as involving duties as well as rights, and could not subscribe to the opinion that "man, when he is worthy of his name, tames or dominates

his bestial brothers" (*Action Française*, January 15th, 1901) or the emphatic assertion that the end of an aristocracy "is not the general good" (M. Lasserre in *l'Action Française*). Again, they might agree as to the desirability of a Catholic King; but no Catholic could subscribe to M. Bainville's contention that the advantage of religious orthodoxy for a king is that it puts him in a stronger position for resisting the Pope! This view may even account for the fact that some twenty thousand Catholics of the *Action Française* (including at least one priest) are now in rebellion against Rome, although a majority of the Catholic supporters of the movement have fortunately submitted.*

Finally, though both parties might believe in authority and write splendid articles in praise of the Holy See, the proof of the pudding is, to a certain extent at least, in the eating; and the irreverent scenes in Notre Dame and the Madeleine and the hissing of the Holy Father in the Vatican itself are a strange commentary on this authoritarian movement. Catholics obey the Holy See not because they love the idea of authority, but because they believe in its Divine character. Of course it is answered that the refusal of the *Action Française* to obey is based on a conviction that the Pope has condemned them from motives of political expediency on the part of his entourage, who have misinformed him concerning the

* Even *La Croix* is now definitely on the side of the Pope, although curiously reticent for a long time.

Action Française. But on what is the whole of this theory based? So far as I can make out the only evidence on which it is built is the fact that the annual address of the Papal Nuncio as *doyen* of the Diplomatic Corps (made just before the final condemnation of the *Action Française*), contained a few words in praise of the pacific intentions of France as defined in one of the speeches of her foreign minister, M. Briand. M. Briand is regarded by the *Action Française* as a traitor. So a Vatican-Briand-Berlin plot was regarded as proven. This theory has been popularised in England by articles in the *Nineteenth Century*, the *National Review* and *Blackwood's Magazine*.

But what are the political advantages which the Church is likely to gain from the condemnation of the *Action Française?* It is probably true that it will weaken the popular legend which credits the clergy with a desire to overthrow the Republic by violent means. That legend would have died a natural death but for the *Action Française*. This may, indeed, ultimately benefit the Church in the sphere of politics. But the vast majority of French Catholics had already accepted the Republic in accordance with Catholic teaching (reiterated by each of the Popes) on respect for lawfully constituted authority.

In Germany the condemnation has been regarded as one more warning from the Holy See against excessive nationalism, and by some it has been thought to indicate a desire on the part of the Pope to please the present Poincaré government.

But, beyond this, it has not been very widely discussed. The wilder view of an understanding and alliance between the Vatican and the French Left can hardly be taken seriously. It would, moreover, appear to be disproved by two facts: first, the fresh avowal of anti-clericalism by the French Radical congress; and, second, the reiterated approval by the Holy See of General de Castelnau * (notoriously a man of the Right) as president of the only Catholic society which concerns itself with political representatives. This is the vast organisation (numbering some two and a half million men) known as the National Catholic Federation. It seems to me that the survival of these more extravagant views is due to the wonderfully ingenious propaganda now being conducted by the *Action Française* against the *prestige* and moral authority of the Holy See. That propaganda is maintained by magazines, newspapers, books, pamphlets and posters, and is on a far greater scale than anything attempted on the Papal side.† This may be a powerful factor in the immediate formation of French Conservative opinion. But time is on the Pope's side; and already moderate men are more and more impressed by the courage with which the Church has faced the present crisis.

* See, for instance, the letter of Cardinal Gasparri on p. 60.

† It is true that a fund was started by the editor of "La Vie Catholique" (M. Francisque Gay, 3 rue Garancière, Paris VI) for propaganda in reply to the *Action Française*. But, in spite of encouragements from the Pope and Bishops, and the compliment of stones being thrown at his windows, M. Gay's subscription has been insignificant when compared with the millions of francs contributed for the propaganda of the *Action Française*. It certainly deserves better support than it has so far received!

II

SOME PASSAGES FROM WRITERS OF THE SCHOOL OF "ACTION FRANÇAISE."

The following passages are intended to illustrate the criticisms of various writers in the previous essay. They are not meant to constitute a *syllabus errorum!*

" . . . it is a question whether the idea of God, of the one God, present to the conscience, has always been beneficent and politic. The positivists observe with reason that this idea may also turn to anarchy. Too often in revolt against the general interests of the species and of the human sub-groups (nation, caste, city, family), the individual only submits, in many cases, from necessity, horror of solitude, fear of destitution: but if in this naturally anarchic conscience one allows the idea to grow that one can establish direct relations with the absolute being, infinite and all-powerful, the idea of this invisible and far-off master will soon have removed the respect which it owes to its visible and near masters: it will prefer to be obedient to God than to men."

(MAURRAS: *Trois idées politiques*, p. 59.)

" . . . augmented by the infinite, multiplied by the infinite, each egoism justifies itself by the name of God and each one calls his *idée fixe* or his favourite sensation divine: Justice or Love, Mercy or Liberty."

(*Ibid*, p. 59.)

"nay, more [the idea of God] takes away . . . from the passions their air of nature, their simple and beautiful *naiveté*. It corrupts them with a ridiculous metaphysic. . ."

(*Ibid*, p. 60.)

Further, in regard to theism, "if for an instant it gives to each individual a certain ardour and a certain energy, this is only an appearance; this passing excitement of pride does not outweigh the evil it creates, since it decomposes and dissolves all the elements of the community of men, not only the State and its divers modes, but also science and even thought. . ."

(*Ibid*, p. 59.)

"Among the ancient Israelites, the elect prophets of God . . . were subjects of disorder and of agitation."

(MAURRAS: *Trois idées politiques*, p. 60.)

"Isaias and *Jesus*, David and Jeremiah, Ezechiel and Solomon . . . gave by their examples and their discourses the models of pure madness" (la frénésie toute pure).

(MAURRAS: *Action Française*, t.I., p. 318.)

To show that it is against Christ Himself that he inveighs and not against some perverted idea, he makes explicit reference to "the gospels of four obscure Jews."

(MAURRAS: *Chemin de Paradis*, Preface XXX.)

"a salutary realism, a beneficent Atheism makes them cast away the supernatural, the mystical, . . . as 'chimeras and superstitions'."

(MAURRAS: *Le Romantisme française*, p. 97.)

"Cruelly pursued by the darts of Apollo, Christian eyes filled with anger, hate and despair. . . If sometimes they seemed to have found rest they raise themselves calm, serene, etherialised, take care! It is then that they express the most knowing and the most proud malice! . . . The hatred which I read in these kinds of Christian eyes is precise, it is the quintessence of the Christian hate against the earth. . . At bottom is it not a supreme trick of incurables to set themselves to love sickness and exalt it?"

(LASSERRE: *Action Française*, t.V., p. 277.)

" To convince the world that in their greatness the masters are vile and that in their vileness the slaves are great . . . (is to declare) that there is another beauty than visible beauty."

(LASSERRE : *La Morale de Nietzsche*, p. 77.)

" How can one brand and dishonour from here below the pride and power of the master except in the name of another life, not passing but eternal, of which the order will be the reversal of the earthly order and where the disinherited will be the elect ? Paradise and all the ' beyonds ' have been conceived by the spite, the pride and the foolish hope of slaves."

(LASSERRE : *La Morale de Nietzsche*, p. 78.)

" Men tend to realise their religious ideas in society, that is ideas born of their relation to the world, the Absolute, God ; consequently they deform society in order to bend it to religious ends which are non-social or anti-social."

(TAUXIER : *Action Française*, t.XII., p. 376.)

" I by no means attack Catholicism but primitive Christianity, which is a very different thing. Catholicism is a religion in conformity with the sensual and sentimental needs of humanity. . . "

(REBELL : *Union des Trois Aristocracies*, p. 21.)

" The old France professed a traditional Catholicism which, submitting Jewish visions and Christian sentiment to a discipline derived from the Greek and Roman world, carries with it the natural order of humanity."

(MAURRAS : *Trois Idées Politiques*, p. 10.)

(It is one of the " philosophic honours " of the Church to have) " given the verses of the Magnificat a music which attenuates its poison."

(MAURRAS : *Le Chemin de Paradis*, Preface, p. XXIX.)

" The merit and honour of Catholicism was to *organise* the idea of God and so remove this poison . . . there is only one

man [i.e. the Pope] who can allow himself in the name of God some deviations (égarements) of thought and conduct, and all around him combines to protect him from this."

(MAURRAS: *Trois idées politiques*, p. 59.)

"If God speaks in secret to the Catholic heart His words are as it were controlled . . ."

(MAURRAS: *Trois idées politiques*, p. 59.)

Describing in Anthinéa (p. 125) the discovery of a statue of Christ among the classic ruins of Athens, M. Maurras writes: "I felt no surprise. But I felt the need of running into the open air to rid myself of the disquiet (le trouble) into which I was thrown by this sudden return of the new world and of the Nazarene through whom the ancient fell. It seemed to me that under the cross of this suffering God, night had come upon the modern age."

The paradox of M. Maurras' laudation of Catholicism is thus analysed by J. Dimier, one of the founders of the *Action Française*:—"It was out of hatred for Christianity, and as a precaution against the ills it causes, that Catholicism was defended."

(*Vingt Ans d'Action Française.*)

". . . the beautiful idea of the Finite. It is the only reasonable one . . . *certain definitions*, as our poets sing, and just confines beyond which extend an obscene chaos."

(MAURRAS: *Chemin de Paradis*, Preface XII-XIII.)

"I have branded and blasted (marqué et flétri) Religions and Desires in turn as similarly powerless to content us by themselves."

(MAURRAS: *Le Chemin de Paradis*, Preface, p. XV.)

A whole category of philosophers from Plato onwards have been "less Graeco-Latin than barbarian, Christian and already Romantic."

(MAURRAS: *Trois idées politiques*, p. 54.)

"The Eternal, the infinite, the intemporal, the impersonal, grandiose and empty images which a servile philosophy makes to shine on the abyss of nothingness."

(LASSERRE: *La Morale de Nietzsche*, p. 56.)

"Properly speaking, there is no such thing as moral truth."

(MOREAU: *Action Française*, 1st Jan., 1905, p. 38).

"The moral point of view is an anarchist point of view."

(TAUXIER: *Action Française*, Jan. 1904, p. 32.)

"I have ventured to invoke in face of a thousand errors the perfect types (types achevés) of Reason, of Beauty and of Death, triple and unique end of the world."

(MAURRAS: *Le Chemin de Paradis*, Preface, p. XXXI.)

"Our philosophy of nature does not exclude the supernatural."

(MAURRAS: *Le Dilemme de Marc Sangnier*, p. 13 & p. 29.)

"God has never done anything so great (de tel) for any country as in creating the *Action Française*."

(*Action Française*, Dec. 2, 1910.)

M. Maurras, whose avowed aim is "to conciliate in the heart the religious and the voluptuous demon" tells us that "the excellent life consists in missing nothing" (à ne rien méconnaitre).

(MAURRAS: *Le Chemin de Paradis*, Preface, p. XVI.)

"The solicitude (inquiétude) of the infinite is not an intellectual solicitude."

(LASSERRE: *Le Romantisme française*.)

"Good or bad, our tastes are our own and it is always lawful to take us for our only judges and models of our life."

(MAURRAS: *Le Chemin de Paradis*, Preface, p. XXIX.)

"All right comes from force. Victorious it has been able to organise what it has subjected and make the result of war into the law of peace."

(LASSERRE: *La Morale de Nietzsche*, p. 33.)

"The public safety, behold (that is) my only criterion."

(MAURRAS: *Action Française*, t.V., p. 329.)

"Man when he is worthy of his name tames or dominates his bestial brothers."

(*Action Française*, Jan. 15th, 1901, p. 105.)

"Your *raison-d'être* . . . is your pride; you have no right to your life except in so far as you know how to make it reign over that of others."

(REBELL: *Union des Trois Aristocracies*, p. 19.)

"I have had occasion to fight three duels."

(DAUDET: *Vers le Roi*, p. 212.)

"An ideal attracts me, to create dominators, to give pride to those who deserved to have it."

(REBELL: *Union des Trois Aristocracies*, p. 18.)

"Humanity is not represented by the crowd but by an *élite*."

(REBELL: *Union des Trois Aristocracies*, p. 26.)

"I am in favour of the prostitute having to gain her bread, because otherwise so many men would never enjoy her beauty."

(*Ibid*, p. 35.)

"Let us have money and, with money, let us buy all means and instruments (mobiles). Let us buy women, let us buy consciences . . ."

(*Action Française*, 1st March, 1908.)

"We must recruit in the mass of true Frenchmen a minority full of daring and energy. We must form a brigade of iron. . .

Is revolt a good means? Very good. Conspiracy? Excellent. The 'coup d'état'? Perfect. Must we approach a general or have a prefect of police? When we are ready we shall see."

(Letter of MAURRAS to Ed. Drumont quoted in *De Léon XIII. au Sillon*, p. 83.)

"Realism does not consist in forming one's ideas of the public security on the tame calculation of hazards constantly foiled . . . but in preparing what one considers as good, useful, necessary for the country *by all the successive means which present themselves.*"

(MAURRAS: *Avenir de l'Intelligence*, p. 279.)

"Let us then be clever: the Orphean lyre is powerless for the moment to move the vile brutes who surround us; let us seize the sword or the tipstaff; let us use cunning; let us practise violence; we must by turns be combatants, apostles, panderers (proxénètes). . . Let the artist have the cult of gold. It is not a matter of sacrificing his thought but of imposing it. In default of princely protection wealth remains the best means of dominating men."

(REBELL: *Union des Trois Aristocracies*, p. 37 & p. 41.)

"All force is good in so far as it is beautiful and triumphs."

(VAUGEOIS: *Action Française.*)

"Life or force has no other justification than itself: it is the sovereign fact."

(TAUXIER, A. F., t.XII., p. 286; Dec. 1, 1899.)

To obtain the unity of consciences M. Maurras judges that there must be "from time to time some tears accompanied by cries, and even a little blood spilt."

(MAURRAS: *Chemin de Paradis*, XXIV.)

(Against the Duke of Orleans.)

"Everyone understands the necessity of disobedience, necessity for the public safety, an act of legitimate patriotic

defence, not against the King, but against his unworthy counsellors."

(*Action Française*, Dec. 20th, 1910.)

"One cannot consider any interest as more important than the interest of the State."

(MOREAU: *Action Française*, May 20th, 1910.)

"However indispensable an aristocracy may be for the peace and the necessity of the nation its essential end is not the general good but its own merit (sa propre vertu). Alone it has the enjoyment of the honours . . ."

(LASSERRE: *Action Française*, t.I.)

"Never did slaves let the fruitfulness (of their marriages) go beyond the wishes of the State. Each country had the number of inhabitants which it could nourish, clothe and honour. This moderation has, indeed, ceased to be practised."

(MAURRAS: *Chemin de Paradis*, p. 296.)

In *l'Avenir de l'Intelligence* Maurras observes that "The restauration of the very Christian monarchy was plotted by a very pagan woman and an ex-Bishop." (Aimée de Coigny and Talleyrand.) He groups together "the poetic adventure of Joan of Arc and this intrigue of castle and salon"

"How many of the born slaves of our acquaintance would recover peace in the depths of dungeons (ergastules) from which history has stupidly exiled them? . . . Dying from a cowardly disquiet and rotted with an elegiac vanity, one ought to hasten for them the bénefit of the pillory . . ."

(MAURRAS: *Chemin de Paradis*, Preface XXVIII.)

c.f. the words of the slave unjustly crucified (in the same book): "My Lord, it was necessary for you that I should suffer even unto death. And I did not refuse to."

(p. 281.)

"Charles Jundzill," wrote Maurras, "represents with great clarity the trouble (malaise) which almost all minds have felt who, born in the Catholic tradition, have become estranged from the Catholic Faith . . . One would employ a very inexact expression in saying that he was without God . . . his mind felt a *rigorous need* of doing without God."

(*Romantisme et Revolution*, p. 96.)

"The chain of ideas which I expose is quite sufficiently pagan and Christian to merit the fine name of Catholic which belongs to the religion in which we were born."

(*Chemin de Paradis.*)

"The variations which (M. Etienne Lamy) has been able to note in me are those of feeling. They are explained by circumstances. As to my doctrines properly so-called there has been no important variation between those of 1906 and those of a dozen years earlier."

(MAURRAS.)

"I had certain passages with Maurras on the foundations, but in vain. All his nerves and passions were engaged on that point. 'I must tell you,' he said one day, 'that with your religion you have dirtied the world in a strange way for one thousand eight hundred years.' Such fury excited one's pity."

(DIMIER, *Vingt Ans d'Action Française.*)

"It would be useless to pretend that a collaboration is exercised on . . . the purely political *terrain*. We need not act the modest about the importance of our directive design; its political character does not make it mediocre, it aspires high since it wills to bring about the French counter-revolution, in rallying and reorganising the positive forces of the nation.

"We cannot, therefore, help bringing into play the thoughts and feelings which, in their *ensemble* and in detail, derive from the religious *dominium* or *condominium*: to that domain which religion shares with other powers *and* to that domain which she has particularly reserved to herself."

(MAURRAS: *Democratie religieuse*, p. 443.)

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Maurras replied to the Comte de Lantivy, who had been scandalised by *Anthinéa*:

"I admire your faith . . . because, to put all in one word, it is the Catholic Faith. I have always believed that Catholicism has saved the human race."

"If I said *from what* (Catholicism had saved the human race), M. de Lantivy would be shocked. But I find it useless to shock anyone among us when we are together."

(*Politique Religieuse*, p. 23.)

"Decidedly you had reason: '*politics first.*' The political machine must be changed. Nothing is possible without this cleaning up . . . A normal *régime* renders charitable works possible . . . An abnormal *régime* will corrupt them. . . ."

(*Action Française*, May 1st, 1926.)

c.f.—"The French Order has existed Catholic and Monarchical. Nothing permits one to say that it can be re-established as Catholic without becoming monarchical."

(BERNARD DE VESINS, *Action Française*, 15th August, 1905.)

"Applied to nations egoism becomes a duty and a virtue."

(BAINVILLE: *La Guerre et l'Italie.*)

In a book which assumes throughout that religious professions are determined by political considerations, M. Bainville writes a typical page on one of the most sacred episodes in French history:—

"Clovis on his side had certainly reflected and matured his designs. He was well informed about the moral state of Gaul. He had understood the situation. This barbarian had the taste for what is great and his enterprise could only succeed, endure and develop if he respected Catholicism . . . It was necessary that Clovis should convert himself. His conversion was admirably brought about. This barbarian knew everything; he repeated the conversion of the emperor Constantine on the field of battle."

(BAINVILLE: *Histoire de France*, p. 304.)

The A. F. was finally condemned in January 1927. An agnostic admirer of M. Maurras wrote in April: "After all, let us be just. The Church is within her rights in refusing to be disguised. Also, it might be somewhat chimerical to hope to 'romanise' from the outside. This great attempt to 'dechristianise' Catholicism could but end in failure since . . . the Church refused to ally herself with Positivism which would have regenerated her. Did she fear to be less divine? Does she not know that her worst spiritual venture would be to lose her footing and to be detached from the earth?

"The dream will haunt us yet a long time. It would have been as beautiful as it would have been useful to reconcile all powers of the mind now when the mind is being questioned.

"A marvellous legend spread itself about the Church. It was whispered very low that she was about to arm her Saints and her God in the defence of civilisation. This story was untrue. On the contrary the Church has delivered herself to the furies of the age. She had dedicated herself anew to the games of the circus. Let her experience these triumphs! We still have Minerva who will not ask us to surrender our arms."

(*Mercure de France*, April 1st, 1927.)

III

SOME JUDGMENTS ON THE "ACTION FRANÇAISE"

(1) Mgr. Péchenard, Bishop of Soissons (1910), wrote congratulating Abbé Pierre on his book against the *Action Française* :—

"I thank you for unmasking this laboratory of abominable doctrines : atheism, materialism, contempt for our holy religion, outrage to Jesus Christ, insult to all the Christian virtues, the glorification of all the lusts, of pleasure, of ambition, of pride, the cult of force, the oppression of all that is weak. And to say that they dream of building a political *régime* on these negations and these ruins, and that they would force us to bow before such monstrosities !" . . . and again : "I shall rejoice sincerely on the day when Rome, recovered from a first surprise . . . shall condemn these enemies of Jesus Christ who are working to dechristianise the world" . . . and again : "what a peril for the future of Catholicism in France if, under colour of politics, they infest the mind of our dear Catholic youth with the detestable atheism, which would make us sink lower than Paganism, and a day would infallibly come when these

preachers of irreligion and immorality would be acclaimed and followed as the educators of a new generation."*

(2) Mgr. Mignot, Archbishop of Albi (1913), denounced the " scandalous theories of those who, by a strange combination of words, they call Catholic Atheists."

(3) Mgr. Chapon, Bishop of Nice (1913), in a Pastoral Letter dated April 25th, 1913, wrote :—

" This rehabilitation of paganism does not only express itself in morals and institutions ; writers have met together to commend it publicly and they have pushed their audacity and contempt for historic truth to the point of representing the coming of Jesus Christ and His doctrine as a decadence in the social life of humanity . . . and their impudence to the point of calling back, by their desires and hopes, a society dead from its own corruption, and of which nothing would have remained had not the Church gathered up the remnants in order to regenerate them." . . .

" If this attempt were the exclusive work of our declared enemies and was done openly, perhaps it would be less to be feared ; but at the time at which I write, it is being pursued by blind or perfidious writers, who endeavour to erect, on the purest principles of a scarcely

* About 20,000 Catholic followers of Maurras are now in revolt against the legislation of the Church.

disguised atheism and positivism, a whole social and political morality; and, what one could never have imagined, it is under pretext and with the pretention of serving the Church that they endeavour to discredit Jesus Christ, His moral code and His doctrine. This tactic, exploited by able sophists, still covers, in the eyes of a good many Catholics, their true thought and veritable designs, which they avow, moreover, among the initiated . . ."

(4) Mgr. Catteau, Bishop of Luçon (1913) to his priests:—

"Have what opinions you like. Be royalists or be republicans, I say nothing about that, but do not give your allegiance to the *Action Française*."

(5) Mgr. Robert du Botneau (1914) to the ladies of the Catholic Union at Sables-d'Oloune:—

"What is the *Action Française?* It is a school, a doctrine, or rather a formidable religious and social heresy. Just as the doctrinal formulary of Islam is extracted from the Coran of Mahomet, so from the works of the new prophet Maurras comes a complete body of doctrine of which the poison is distilled by the hybrid society of the *Action Française*, but in doses calculated according to the degrees of initiation of which the public to which it addresses itself is susceptible. In its basis of fundamental principles the doctrine of Maurras is horrible.

A universe without God, in the bosom of which there crawl beings cursing an existence which brings them only unassuaged appetites, a world ruled by force and from which all charity, all hope, is excluded: a world where the mass of humanity only exists to serve as a stepping stone and as fodder for an *élite* of intellectuals and pleasure-seekers: this is a *resumé* of that doctrine which manifestly comes from hell . . ."

(6) Mgr. Le Roy, Superior of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost (1914), strikes the same note of amazement:—

"I had read through *Anthinéa*, which a good soul, wishing to provide useful reading for our missionaries, had sent me, and I was struck by the author's pagan conception of society, of literature, of art, of life. In this conception the *rôle* assigned to the Church is the most injurious which could be dreamed of."

(7) Mgr. Many, sub-dean of the Rota (1914):—

"What amazes me is to see a certain number of good Catholics regard M. Maurras as their master and that even certain priests profess a more than ordinary confidence in him."

(8) The Memoir of Mgr. Guillibert, Bishop of Fréjus, of whom Maurras had been a pupil, presented to the Pope on December 17th, 1913, a month before the condemnation by Pius X, is so important that it must be given very fully:—

" . . There is much to say and many dis-

tinctions to make on this amazing subject of the *Action Française*. How many confusions exist because people will not distinguish clearly the multiple contradictory aspects and the hidden activities?

"At the beginning there was an honourable and noble disgust at the sight of the crimes perpetrated increasingly by the detestable *régime* of democratic tyranny which is exhausting France and is implacable against her traditions.

"Some intelligent men, come from all sides, some of them Catholics, but for the greater part unbelievers and proud to proclaim themselves as such, formed, after other abortive efforts, a political group called the *Action Française*.

"Politicians first (as they have long been considered at Rome, and under this cover one did not think oneself in a position to examine their doctrines), these gentlemen have inevitably arrived by their very studies, conducted seriously and methodically, at professing a body of doctrine; and as religion is at the bottom of everything, and as Catholicism moulded the fundamental institutions of France, this doctrine became sensibly religious, false from many points of view, and, indeed, in its foundations.

"The most brilliant mind of this group, which constituted itself an association for studies and has published its conclusions in a periodical review called the *Action Française* (which one must not confuse with the political journal which has appeared for some years

under the same name), the most brilliant of the initiators of this movement of ideas is M. Charles Maurras, whom I know and still love, although I detest and deplore the unbelief into which he has fallen, for he was my favourite pupil from the age of seven until after his course of philosophy, which I myself directed.

" When I was *curé* at Martignes, in the diocese of Aix (1873–78), this little child (the son of a modest functionary, a decent man but not a practising Christian) was confided to my care by his mother, a genuine Christian. I assisted his father at the hour of death and had the consolation of preparing him for it by all the helps of religion. Called to Aix in 1878 to govern a college founded there by the Archbishop, Mgr. Forcade, Madame Maurras came there on purpose to put under my charge this son who promised exceptional abilities. When, having arrived at the study of humanities, the boy lost his sense of hearing, one of the most distinguished of the masters, a man of admirable zeal, M. Penon, to-day Bishop of Moulins, undertook, with my agreement, to teach him humanities and rhetoric *tête à tête*. After her son's course of philosophy and his successes at the public examinations, Madame Maurras left for Paris, in order to procure a useful future for this brilliant young man and his brother.

" Charles Maurras became a journalist. He established various (literary) connections and

unfortunately came under disastrous influences, especially that of a certain Lucien Moreau, a declared atheist, to whom, none the less, he dedicated his recent work on *La Politique Religieuse* (Paris, 1912). The same fantasies of irreligion made him dedicate his recent *Enquête sur la Monarchie* 'Domino optimo, seu pessimo, etc.,' a bizarre detail which suffices, let us observe at once, to illustrate his paradoxical taste and Maurras' subtle tendency for intellectual audacities, in which he forms combinations making play with the most crying antinomies. We shall return to this dangerous facility, which, thanks to a marvellous talent, gives to sophisms and contradictions the appearances of truth, to which trifling minds betake themselves like butterflies to false lights.

"Meanwhile Maurras attached himself to the oldest if not the most fashionable of the royalist journals, the *Gazette de France*, and by the originality, the unexpectedness and the boldness of his articles, raised the position of that paper and acquired therein a real ascendancy over the adherents of the old party, which he tried to connect with that *Action Française* to which he now attached himself and of which he soon became the leader.

"What was taught in this group which afterwards organised itself into an Institute of free teaching? All authority, philosophic or religious, was repudiated *a priori;* the point of departure was positive observation applied

to sociology, as the physicists apply it to the subject-matter of the physical sciences.

"With Auguste Comte and other writers of the nineteenth century, of whom some were stubbornly irreligious, but endowed with rare intellectual capacities, they arrived at establishing the erroneous character and disastrous effects of the revolutionary principle called the Sovereignty of the People (the principle of '89 derived from J. J. Rousseau) and at accepting as the natural basis of societies the action of the strongest, derived from Darwinian theories . . . and soon, by successive observations, to the *principle of authority*.

"During this period and in their essays of induction, there were assertions thoroughly opposed to morality: contempt for little ones and the weak, voluptuousness and the apotheosis of Greek paganism, etc., etc. . . . From this period date the first editions of two objectionable works of Charles Maurras, *Chemin de Paradis* and *Anthinéa*, which (in spite of a certain formal bowdlerising of too crudely irreligious passages) he has not renounced, since they figure on the very prospectus attached to the book of yesterday, offered to the Holy Father, *l'Action Française et la Religion Catholique*.

"As for the unbelieving collaborators of M. Maurras, their writings were no better and were often worse. These pretended only to deal with politics, and for long, too long, they have profited by this subterfuge before the ecclesi-

astical power. At a time when the doctrinal errors and excessive democratic tendencies of another French school were justly threatened by Rome, I myself represented to an eminent Cardinal that too much liberty was allowed to other and opposite errors, to which he simply replied: 'But the *Action Française* escapes us because it only deals with politics.'

"But by the nature of things—and it is in itself all to the honour of religion, which penetrates, and should penetrate, everywhere—the *Action Française* had engaged itself in religious matters, whether by throwing over Christianity when it appeared to militate against the accepted evolutionist doctrine, or by utilising its principle of strength and order, on the day when these gentlemen came to put as their social foundation —Authority.

"But with what anti-Christian care they claim to keep their independence of mind; and who can fail to see in this the flagrant contradiction of that principle of authority which yet they would exploit, affirming always, with private judgment (le libre examen), their individuality, the supreme judge?

"The Roman Catholic Church, which knew how to correct semitic extravagances . . . including the sermon on the mount and the whole of the Gospel, by giving to the Jewish teachings of Christ Himself the harmony and order of the Roman character! . . . This Church becomes, then, in their political system, a useful col-

laborator. *They will make use of her*, and the suggestion is indicated that they will *serve her* for the common good. Whether the Church is divine or human is not their concern.

" That is the real outcome of the doctrines of the *Action Française*. This combination, at first unexpected, and afterwards so happy in its effect on public opinion (pour l'effet public) of conclusions drawn from positivist modes of thought with the principle of social theology, authority modifying liberty, has been the richest of discoveries.

" And as the *Action Française* was supported above all by Royalists, and as in all countries the Royalists are generally recruited among the old families which have also preserved religious sentiments, this alliance between atheist positivists or unbelievers and the fervent disciples of the most ardent parties of political reaction suddenly gave to this *Action Française* a marvellous prestige in the eyes of those who do not go deep into things.

" And as those who assert themselves and cry the loudest dominate the timid and silence those who talk less loudly, it has come about that the leaders of this party are boldly presented as the indisputable pillars of French tradition and of the union, proclaimed as necessary, between the throne and the altar . . . and one knows what this union has produced when divorced from Christian dogma !

" At the same time, whilst laymen were allow-

ing themselves to be impressed by these fierce conclusions, the strange premises of which they did not examine, some members of the clergy and notably some religious and some disbanded (secularisés) members of religious orders, sincerely devoted to the defence of the old Christian doctrine on the relations between Church and State, and—one must add—inclined, in some cases at least, to the too absolute opinions of royalist theologians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, rejoiced, with a keenness doubled by its sincerity, at what seemed a great success for Catholicism, to know of this proclamation of the principle of authority as the salvation of societies, and the homage given to the Church by men without faith.

"They did not fear to enrol themselves in the following of M. Maurras and of his friends, in their political campaign, thus covering over by their sacred calling and sometimes by a real talent, what was inconsistent and very dangerous for the young who, fascinated by an appearance (mise en scène) of royalism and Catholicism loudly proclaimed, were exposed to compromises of doctrine very dangerous for their faith.

"Many have been the examples of moral defection. This Catholicism of label and cockade sufficed to make them regarded as supporters of the cause, and as the leaders were without any Christian faith, why should they, in their turn, generate it?—seeing above all that religious, priests, and even one or two prelates exalted

Maurras and his friends ! That is how, with the best intentions, one comes seriously to compromise the Church.

" In favour of these unlooked-for supports enthusiasm was without measure. The other journals, even Catholic ones, if they tried to speak, saw themselves treated as organs of liberalism. The writers of the *Action Française* felt themselves so immune from the severities of the judges of orthodoxy that they gave themselves out as the only adepts of the mind of Rome !

" Vainly did the Holy Father declare religion to be above parties. They would repeat his expression, but immediately add as the minor premiss of the syllogism, that Royalty was the only means of saving religion in France.

" The bishops dared not publish anything, feeling that they were not supported, for, with the superficiality of public opinion, one thinks twice before speaking, when the next day one will be decried as suspect.

" Nevertheless, Rome became enlightened on the subject (la lumière s'est faite à Rome). Already the party had seen many eyes opened when the promoters of authority (did not hesitate to) parade their disobedience to their king and saw him, in this case, capitulate before them.

" Now that they feel their position threatened, from the point of view of the false doctrines which

they mingle with certain true ideas, and that they have heard rumours of the preoccupation of the Holy See with their case, they have attempted this recent act of audacity, very able, as it is their wont to be. At a large meeting in Paris, everyone standing, one of their party read aloud the last chapter of the last book of Maurras, written expressly as an apology for the doctrines of the *Action Française*. This last chapter is an appeal to the Holy Father, Pius X. Its author persists in proclaiming himself an unbeliever without suggesting that he wishes to be anything else, and, without repentance or renunciation of his errors, dares to count on the blessings and indulgence of the Father of the Catholic family!

"The high wisdom of Pius X has already seen the trap laid and the bold defiance.

"I do not go so far as to tax my old pupil with hypocrisy. No, I believe him honest. But he is so inured to tilting with the pen, so brilliant in his intellectual fireworks, so audacious in his journalistic enterprises, that he has become habituated to paradox and, to my mind, although not being in practice a consciously proud man, he hesitates before nothing, braves everything, and thinks himself armed to dominate everything, adulated, as he is, almost as a demi-god, in the circle of his partisans.

"Well! though he had made his king capitulate he will not make our Pope!

" This game of *enfants terribles*, little by little, becomes a party and aiming at violent domination, covers too many equivocal positions, culpable *mélanges*, disguised ambitions and has too few roots in the country where one does not live merely by abstraction and dreams, to encroach upon the heights whereon repose, under the inviolable guardianship of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the truths, the rights, the promises of the kingdom of God.

" All the efforts of the world, which knows how to clothe itself in attractive garbs, but which is none the less *totus in maligno positus* will do nothing there.

" Pardon is generously accorded to whoever humbles himself and repents. But he who stands rigid before Mercy and will retract nothing . . . who wishes, on the contrary, to be blessed as a rebel, has nothing to hope for !

" I have developed along one line, without premeditation, and as my pen rubs . . . . the thoughts that I have long been meditating before God. Suffering from the vagaries of my old and always dear pupil, humbled by the encouragement which some imprudent priests think they ought to give him, and emulation of which is further abused, I am well assured that our Lord watches over His Church and that the *arbor mala* will be judged only by its fruits the day when the papal wisdom will have to judge it."

(9) From the letter of Mgr. Mignot, Archbishop of Albi, to Pope Benedict XV. (Oct. 1914.)

"Some young men, excellent Christians, as their filial submission has already proved, have been dealt with very harshly (an allusion to the condemnation of the *Sillon*). Complete freedom of action, however, was assured to a group of neo-positivists who boasted that they were protected by men high in power. And yet those who could speak with authority did not fail to raise a warning voice against the danger to faith and morals incurred by membership in a society whose leaders were agnostics and anti-Christians. Great havoc has already been wrought in the ranks of Catholic youth by these false prophets, several of whom enjoy a wide popularity. Many a conscience has been set astray by them, paganism supplanting Christian principles. They are persistently trying to destroy Christianity, and in a few years we shall see a large proportion of Catholics enrolled in this growing army of neo-pagans. Bishops are powerless to stop their propaganda because of local conditions, and likewise because of the material needs which they must meet. They have been allowed to act as though they alone were the appointed defenders of the Catholic faith, for they are in close affiliation with the hidden power.*

"Enemies of Jesus Christ have proclaimed their devotion to the Roman Catholic Church

* The secret society alluded to on p. 17.

and even theologians were deceived by these errors. The awakening may be terrible. I must add that those high in authority have given much anxious care and thought to the spiritual ruin which is being wrought."

IV

THE HOLY SEE AND THE "ACTION FRANÇAISE"

Decree of the Holy Office { Jan. 29th, 1914. / Dec. 29th, 1926.

As various persons have asked that a diligent enquiry should be made on the mind and intention of this Apostolic See and above all on that of Pius X of happy memory concerning the works and writings of Charles Maurras and the periodical entitled the *Action Française*, His Holiness Pope Pius XI has ordered me, the undersigned, assessor of the Holy Office, to search with care the Acts and *dossiers* of the Sacred Congregation of the Index—which, as all know, has been joined and incorporated with the Holy Office—and to make a report thereon.

The result of this enquiry is as follows:—

I. In the preparatory Congregation held on Thursday, January 15th, 1914: "All the consultors were unanimously of opinion that the four books of Charles Maurras, *Le Chemin de Paradis*, *Anthinéa*, *Les Amants de Venise* and *Trois Idées Politiques*, were really bad and, therefore, merited to be prohibited; to these works, they declared, should be added the work entitled *l'Avenir de l'Intelligence*.

A certain number of consultors wished to add also, *la Politique religieuse* and *Si le coup de force est possible.*

II. In the general Congregation held on Monday, January 26th, 1914 :—

" The eminent Cardinal prefect declared that he had treated of this matter with the Sovereign Pontiff and that the Holy Father, on account of the number of petitions addressed to him by word of mouth and in writing, even by considerable personages, had really hesitated a moment, but had finally decided that the Sacred Congregation should treat of this matter in full liberty, reserving to himself the publication of the Decree.

" The most Eminent Fathers, entering into the heart of the question, declared that, without any possible doubt, the books designated by the consultors were really very bad and merited censure, all the more as it was difficult to keep young people from (reading) these books, whose author is recommended to them as a master in political and literary questions and as the leader from whom the salvation of the country should be expected. The most Eminent Fathers decided unanimously to proscribe, in the name of the Sacred Congregation, the books enumerated, but to leave the publication of the decree to the wisdom of the Sovereign Pontiff. As for what concerns the periodical *l'Action Française*, a fortnightly review, the most Eminent Fathers esteemed that the same should be decided as in the case of the works of Charles Maurras.

III. Jan. 29th, 1914: "The secretary, received in audience by the Holy Father, related all that had happened in the last Congregation. The Sovereign Pontiff began at once to speak of the *Action Française* and of the works of M. Maurras, saying that, from many sides, he had received requests begging him not to allow these works to be forbidden by the Sacred Congregation, but, affirming that these works are none the less prohibited and should be regarded as such henceforth, according to the terms of the proscription made by the Sacred Congregation, the Sovereign Pontiff always reserving the right to indicate the moment when the decree ought to be published; if a fresh occasion should present itself for doing this, the decree prohibiting this periodical and these books shall be published as from this date."

IV. April 14th, 1915: "The Sovereign Pontiff (Benedict XV of happy memory) has asked the secretary about the books of Charles Maurras and the periodical *l'Action Française*. The secretary has reported in detail to His Holiness all that the Sacred Congregation had done in regard to this subject and how his predecessor, Pius X of holy memory, had ratified and approved the proscription made by the most Eminent Fathers, but had deferred to a more propitious moment the publication of the decree. Having heard this, His Holiness declared that the moment had not yet come; for, whilst the war still continued, political passions would prevent an equitable judgment on this act of the Holy See."

All these things having been reported with care to our Holy Father by myself, the undersigned, His Holiness judged that the time had come to publish and promulgate this decree of Pope Pius X and has decided to affix to the promulgation the date prescribed by his predecessor of happy memory, Pius X.

Moreover, by reason of articles written and published these latter days, especially by the newspaper of the same name, the *Action Française*, and notably by Charles Maurras and by Léon Daudet, articles which every sensible man is obliged to recognise as written against the Apostolic See and the Roman Pontiff himself, His Holiness has confirmed the condemnation made by his predecessor and has extended it to the undermentioned daily, the *Action Française*, as it is published to-day, so that this journal must be held as prohibited and condemned and must be inscribed on the Index of prohibited books, without prejudice for the future to enquiries and condemnations of the works of both these writers.

Given at Rome, at the Palace of the Holy Office, Dec. 29th, 1926.

By order of the Holy Father,
(Signed) CANALI,
Assessor.

During the years of the war the directors of the *Action Française*, after Pius had formally condemned their writings, and knowing, perhaps, that

the condemnation might at any time be published, appear to have abandoned the open expression of Pagan principles. But the demoralising effects of the movement were still felt even by Catholics of Royalist sympathies. Thus Mgr. de Ligonnès, Bishop of Rodez (1924) wrote :—" It is not political passion which makes me speak, for Ligonnès has long been for its king. The Church of France recovered easily enough from the danger it underwent from Sillonism ; it recovered, though with more difficulty, from the evil caused by Modernism, but it will recover with great difficulty from the evil which the *Action Française* is actually doing it."

Meanwhile fresh movements of sympathy with the *Action Française* had begun in Belgium and Switzerland. Abbé Lugan describes them thus :—

" A Belgian Abbé, M. van den Hont, who in 1918 had started a weekly review, *La Revue Catholique des Idées*, wrote one day that there were two beacon lights in the world—the Pope and Maurras.

" ' All things considered, and certain reserves being made,' he said, ' this hold which Maurras has over the intellectual *élite* of the rising generation is a benefit. In the dark night where peoples and governments are struggling, only two beacons are really shining, and the beams they cast are very unequal in brilliancy : *Rome*, with its teachings on the nature and destiny of man, Catholicism whose doctrine has such an important bearing on political issues ; and *Maurras*, whose work, entirely positive

and philosophical, is linked up in so striking a fashion with Catholic conclusions.'

"This astounding statement appeared in the *XXe Siècle*, July 15th, 1923. The editorship of this review was taken over by Abbé van den Hont and another ardent supporter of *l'Action Française*, Abbé Wallez, in order to make it an organ for the spread of Maurras' ideas. The *Nation Belge* already existed in Belgium. Every week, in its pages, the extreme nationalist Bainville brought to the Belgians the glad tidings of the foreign policy of *l'Action Française*. Members of religious orders, like the Jesuit Father Honnay, wrote long articles for Abbé van den Hont's review, presenting Maurras as a splendid apologist of religion, incidentally making a few reservations in order to disarm possible criticism. But after all, Father Honnay in his articles merely sketched what had been treated fully in a French book by Father Descoqs—*A View of Maurras' Work*. Therein, the author fairly buries this atheist under a load of flowers and fulsome praise, and makes light of his errors. The book is quite superficial; it overflows with adulation, and yet it has proved to be one of the strongest factors in winning favour for Maurras amongst the faithful. This favour had already been won in Switzerland. At Lausanne the majority of the students of the Protestant University were his disciples." (*Catholic World*, June 1927.)

In May 1925 an enquiry was held among the Catholic undergraduates of Louvain and elsewhere:

"Among the writers of the last 25 years which are those whom you consider your masters?" (*Cahiers de la Jeunesse Catholique*, May 5th, 1925.) At the top of the list came M. Maurras.

In answer Father Dubin, S.J., published a collective reply by leading Belgian Catholics and roused Catholic opinion once more in France itself by a book called, *Is Maurras Master of Catholic Youth?* After this book the final condemnation of the movement by the Pope, which came in his letter of September 7th, 1926, was widely expected. After the decree of the Index in January 1927 it was further enacted that even those Catholics who had permission to read books on the Index must refrain from reading or supporting the *Action Française* and the condemned books of Maurras under pain of mortal sin.

Letter of Pope Pius XI to Cardinal Andrieu.

On August 25th, 1926, in the *Semaine Religieuse* of the diocese of Bordeaux, a letter appeared from Cardinal Andrieu, Archbishop of Bordeaux, in reply to some Catholic young men who asked if Catholics could support the *Action Française*. The Cardinal began by pointing out that in purely political matters they were free to hold their own opinions, but added that they ought not to accept the direction of the *Action Française* and its leaders:—

"Atheism, agnosticism, anti-Christianity, anti-Catholicism and ammoralism for the individual and

for a society obliged to maintain order in spite of these destructive negations, bringing back to life paganism, with all its injustice and brutality—these, my friends, are the doctrines which the editors of the *Action Française* are teaching their followers—and you must turn away from them."

Unfortunately the Cardinal attributed to Maurras a blasphemous sentence from Victor Hugo, " God is forbidden to enter our laboratories "—a sentence which is less blasphemous, however, than many actually penned by Maurras himself. But the general accusation of a paganising influence was undoubtedly true.

On September 7th, 1926, a letter was published from the Pope to Cardinal Andrieu, which ran as follows :—

" Quite properly your Eminence puts aside questions of a purely political nature such, for instance, as the form of government. But, on the other hand, as your Eminence did well to remark, no such freedom exists to follow blindly the leading of the *Action Française* in matters pertaining to faith and morals.

" Your Eminence enumerates and justly condemns (in publications old and new) indications of a new religious moral and social system, concerning, for example, the idea of God, the Incarnation, the Church and in a general way Catholic dogma and morals, especially when they have a necessary bearing on the political order which is logically subject to the moral law. Substantially, these indications point to a renaissance of paganism, to

which is closely linked the naturalism which these authors, like many of their contemporaries, have absorbed (unconsciously, we believe) from the public teaching of the modern neutral school—that corrupter of youth, against which they themselves have often vigorously stormed.

"Always anxious at the sight of the dangers which rise upon every side to ensnare the youth of the land who are so dear to us, and now more troubled than ever at the drift of their minds—even when the goal they seek—love of country—is so worthy of all praise—we are gladdened by the sound of voices which of late—even beyond the borders of France—have been heard giving a warning to be on guard." (An allusion, of course, to the representations from Belgium.)

In an address given at the end of September 1926, the Pope said: "With regard to Our letter, there are some who seem incapable of understanding what the Pope meant. Well, all they have to do is to read once more what the Pope has written; let them read it quietly, setting aside preconceived notions, and let the reading be done in that spirit of filial devotion on which the Pope can count with absolute certainty.

"Others seem to imagine that somehow or other mysterious mental reservations have been made for diplomatic or political reasons. Nothing of the kind has been done. The Pope has acted in this matter, as he always acts in the work of his apostolic ministry, preoccupied solely with the

fulfilment of his duty, to promote the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls, to prevent evil and to advance goodness, his singleness of purpose uninfluenced by any political party whatsoever . . .

" Others, again, would have us believe that they are guided by that old formula, that one must appeal from the Pope badly informed to the Pope well informed. . . . What should be said on the contrary, most emphatically and with the utmost confidence, is that the first thing the Pope did (fully aware as he is of his responsibility and even at the risk of failing to take needful action in time) was to gather all possible information, sift it out carefully, and not to come to a decision until he had made certain that not only were his findings perfectly true, but that the proper time had come to state them."

On the general subject of the Church's attitude to purely political questions, Cardinal Gasparri wrote the following letter to General de Castelnau, President of the National Catholic Federation, on November 23rd :—

" The one aim of His Holiness, as of the Pontiffs who preceded him, is simply and solely to unite all good men in the defence of religion, and to banish whatever divisions or differences of opinion separates them. When Leo XIII was explaining his ideas about the '*ralliement*' in the letter he sent to the French cardinals, May 5, 1892, he said in the clearest terms, ' these efforts of Ours would

be absolutely fruitless, if the conservative forces of the country lacked unity and harmony in striving for the goal, which is the preservation of religion, a worthy goal indeed for every honest man, for every sincere friend of society. And this, Our Encyclical, *Au Milieu des Sollicitudes*, dated February 16th, 1892, has amply proved."

Further on, in the same letter, after showing that the acceptance of a certain form of political power does not necessarily imply the acceptance of legislation which may conflict with the law of God and His Church, Cardinal Gasparri added :

" In the domain of religion thus understood, the various conservative political groups could find a common ground of agreement and they should do so. When on June 19th, 1909, Pius X of saintly memory, replying to Colonel Keller, said that 'nothing seemed to him more timely and more practical than to call upon all good men to unite on a strictly Catholic and religious basis, within the limits traced out by pontifical authority, he was only following the direction given by his predecessor and holding fast to his course. As a matter of fact, he nowhere suggested that religion should be defended by any weapon save those already provided by existing institutions. Furthermore, Leo XIII had said much the same thing in that part of his letter which we have quoted, i.e. 'to accept without any mental reservation, and with that perfect loyalty which should always distinguish a Christian, the existing civil power, whatever its form may be.'

" For all these reasons, His Holiness has deigned to give his whole-hearted approval, General, to your words, which are in such perfect agreement with the line of conduct pointed out to the Catholics of France by the Holy See, and repeated continually since the reign of Leo XIII, so that always upholding the right of all men to a proper measure of freedom in purely political questions (even as regards the form of government), there may be an extension and a development above and beyond all parties—a union of straight-thinking men for the conquest and defence of religious liberty."

After some months of more or less open war against the Papacy during which, as a Belgian critic observed, " M. Maurras thought he was going to frighten the Pope " by accusations of pro-Germanism and suggestions of an even more disgraceful character (not against the Pope personally, but against his advisers), as well as by an immense congress held in Paris, the Pope finally condemned the whole movement in an allocution at the Consistory of December 20th, 1926. It ran as follows:

" Under no consideration should Catholics become members of a movement (which is also, in a way, a school of thought) which puts the interests of party above religion, making religion subservient to party; nor are Catholics allowed to expose themselves and others, especially youth, to influences and doctrines dangerous to faith and

morals and to the Catholic education of the young. And so (not to omit any one of the questions addressed to Us) Catholics are not allowed to support, to encourage or to read journals published by men whose writings, deviating as they do from our dogmas and morality, cannot escape disapproval; furthermore, these same men, in articles, reports and announcements often propose to their readers . . . certain things in which they would find more than one source of spiritual harm."

To this the Catholics of the *Action Française* replied as follows:

"It is a cruel sorrow for sincere Catholics to be placed as we are, it is painful, indeed, for sons to be obliged to refuse obedience to the commands of a father. But to obey him we should be obliged to commit a sin which in its gravity appears to us to be as great a crime as that of parricide. A father who asks his son to kill his mother, or what amounts to the same thing, to allow her to be killed, can perhaps be listened to with respect, but he must not be obeyed. By refusing, we do not cease to be good Catholics." The argument that the *Action Française* is necessary for the very life of France in her present troubles is pursued, with the conclusion: "Though the heart be crushed with sorrow, unfaltering we shall fulfil our duty to the end. We will not betray our country. *Non possumus.*"

The final decree of the Index (January 5th,

1927) was accompanied by another letter from the Pope to Cardinal Andrieu :

" Dearly Beloved and Venerable Cardinal :

" With all Our heart, We thank you for the good wishes you sent to Us in your letter under date of December 23rd last. . . . We take this direct, personal way of addressing you, dispensing with any intermediary, in order to assure you once more that We greatly appreciate the loyal and unstinted co-operation you have given Us during the past few months.

" In the enclosed pages you will be the very first to read a decree treating of the grave question of *l'Action Française* which is soon to be published in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* together with the Acts of the last Consistory. You have a certain right to this priority, because amongst your venerable fellow-bishops you were the first to raise the question and to uphold the cause which became at once Our cause. As you will see, the decree is a rather important one, if only for the fact that at one stroke it destroys the legend built up (in good faith, We are willing to believe) about Our Venerable Predecessor of saintly memory, Pius X. As you see, not only is it shown that neither you, nor We, nor Our assistants, were the first to call attention to this question, but it also shows that We have merely finished what Pius X began.

" It is plainly evident that We would have followed an entirely different procedure if We had known anything about the documents which We are now publishing ; but it was only the day after the

Consistory that they came into Our hands. Of course, it was a painful experience for Us to see comparisons made (as was done, more or less openly) between the name and the supposed conduct of Our Venerated Predecessor and Our own name and manner of action in dealing with *l'Action Française*. We were fully convinced that such opposition could not exist. Pius X was too anti-Modernist to fail to condemn this particular type of political, doctrinal, and practical Modernism as We have had to do. But the documentary evidence was missing; We had none up to the last minute, and it was only after a prolonged search, using methods suggested to Us by the habits of a lifetime largely spent in the midst of books and manuscripts, that the documents were finally discovered. To explain this delay is easy enough, when one remembers that in 1917 (*Motu Proprio*, March 25th) the Sacred Congregation of the Index was incorporated with that of the Holy Office and the archives of both were united.

"The documents explain why Pius X and Benedict XV judged that the time was not opportune, and so delayed the publication of this decree which We now promulgate. Both of them have spoken, and one cannot help seeing that the active influence of some persons in high authority, and the pressure they tried to exercise (to which Pius X makes reference) did not prevent him from giving his approval to the condemnation issued by the Sacred Congregation of the Index. He even laid down that His own name and the date of that

time should be put to the condemnation when published . . .

" There has been revealed an utter lack of any clear understanding of the authority of the Pope and of the Holy See, and its competence to determine what comes within its judicial right ; an equally complete lack of any spirit of submission or even of consideration and respect. There has been revealed, on the contrary, an attitude of revolt and opposition ; truth was forgotten or, rather, it was disdainfully ignored ; insinuations, pure inventions, and downright calumnies were uttered, as false as they were absurd. All this was so abundantly and so clearly minifested that many good Catholics saw and understood to whom and to what a spirit they had, in good faith, entrusted themselves.

" In the midst of these revelations Divine Providence has placed in Our hands the documents which We are forwarding to you. These are the documents which completed the evidence and forced us to condemn the newspaper *l'Action Française*, just as Pius X had condemned the fortnightly review which bore the same name.

" With regard to those books of Charles Maurras proscribed by Pius X, it is clear to every good Catholic that this proscription loses none of its force because that writer decided to make his own index when the Church placed him upon her Index. The proscription, indeed, becomes more forcible, if he declares, as he has declared, that in doing so he has no intention of submitting to any

law. The documents lately discovered furnish the evidence on this particular point—the intervention of the Index—and they bear witness also to the constant mind of the Church on this grave question now under consideration.

"We hope that at the present juncture, such continuity in the supreme judgment of the Church, which the Holy Spirit calls 'the pillar and ground of the truth' will suffice in itself to enlighten minds, to clear away doubts, to bring calm to souls and to restore peace. That is Our fervent desire, and Our most insistent prayer, for all Our dear sons in France, and above all for the well-beloved youth of that land, which at all times, but more especially now, holds first place in Our affection and in Our Apostolic solicitude. But to all of you without exception, Our pastoral heart is open, offering to each of you the warmest of welcomes, showing every consideration, eager to give consolation, if during this hour of trial, which We hope is gone forever, We may have saddened some when We were simply seeking not to be unfaithful to the dread responsibility of safeguarding souls.

"These, then, Your Eminence, are the sentiments which We ask you to convey in Our Name to yourself, to your diocese, and to the whole of France. Our most affectionate blessing.

"PIUS P.P. XI.

"THE VATICAN, Jan. 5th, 1927."

To this Maurras replied by expressing doubts about the documents alleged to have been written by Pius X, and in any case as "these documents could not dispense him from any duty he owed his country, he would follow out the furrow he had traced, he would not stop his work, he would not prove a traitor to a line of thought which undeniably had borne rich fruit, and from which the Church herself had reaped benefits not sought by him."

NOTE ON THE *Action Française* POLEMICS.

In order to understand the Holy Father's references to the polemic conducted by the *Action Française* in the speech which follows, it may be well to recall some of the points raised. These questions are dealt with in the articles of *La Vie Catholique*, republished by the editor in his book *Comment j'ai défendu le Pape.* (By F. Gay. Published by Bloud & Gay, 3, rue Garancière, Paris VI.)

(1) Whether Pope Pius X alluded to Maurras in conversation as "un beau défenseur de la Foi."

(2) Whether Mgr. Guillibert's Memoir is genuine and authentic, and whether he did not retract it afterwards.

(3) Whether the documents of Pius X, which M. Maurras says, "je ne puis m'empêcher de trouver suspects," are authentic.

(4) Whether false copies of the *Action Française* had been presented to the Pope.

(5) The denials of the Bishop of Strasbourg in reply to *Action Française* reports of Papal support for the Alsatian autonomists and of the Pope's supposed wish that he should resign his See. The Bishop's letter contains the sentence: "Que mon cas vous montre ce qu'il faut penser des autres," a sentence omitted in the report of it in the *Action Française.*

(6) The Nuncio's protest against the suggestion of Papal support for the union of Austria with Germany.

The Pope's Address to the French Seminary in Rome.

After the late Rector, Père le Floch, had expressed to His Holiness the very filial veneration, affection and obedience of the Seminary and asked for the apostolic blessing, the Pope spoke as follows:—

"It is always with the greatest pleasure that we see again our dear sons of the French Seminary. But to-day, at this hour, words are not enough to express all our real and fatherly gratitude for your filial visit. You have chosen for giving us the consolation of your presence a time when (you know it only too well) our dear and well-beloved France is giving us preoccupation and (why not say it?) great and deep afflictions. But we ought also to add at once that there come to us, also, very great consolations.

"Venerable Archbishops and Bishops, members

of both clergies (secular and regular), laymen of every class, of every condition, write us very beautiful things, which express their gratitude. We have seen some thank us with tears in their eyes for this intervention about which you know, saying that it is not only opportune, but necessary with a necessity which has become increasingly urgent (that is their oft-repeated expression) on account of the long intoxication and too prolonged poisoning of minds. And they always add, also, the expression of their filial condolences for what others said and did, and alas ! continue to say and do.

" These poor sons fill our heart, indeed, with a great and unspeakable sadness and a still greater fatherly compassion. We have sought long and carefully how to explain to ourselves their attitude. Alas ! we must say that, misled by following and being influenced by directors and masters who for long have soaked their pens (you will not be surprised if an old librarian appeals to his personal knowledge of books) sometimes in the inspirations of a strange '*romanité*' and of a yet stranger Catholicism, sometimes in real Paganism, sometimes in the mud, sometimes in one knows not what high philosophy, sometimes, on the contrary, in a sensuality which is all the more dangerous because more restrained (we do not say always) and its literary form more attractive. Misled by the following and influence of such masters, who have just given the greatest, the most incredible measure of their—what shall I call it ?—their

spirit of sophistry, their arrogance of mind, their boldness, their truly revolutionary spirit—for they preach revolt against that very authority which they themselves are pleased to proclaim the highest, the most necessary, the indispensable—misled by the leadership and under the influence of such masters, these poor sons have only too easily learnt that false theory, already well-worn, of the appeal from the Pope ill-informed to the Pope well-informed, from the Pope who keeps within the province of doctrine and the Pope who goes beyond the domain of doctrine, from the Pope infallible and speaking *ex-cathedra* (which, of necessity, can only be very rarely) and the Pope fulfilling the many other actions which come into the daily government of the Church; they have also learnt to mix declarations of submission to the first of these two Popes with resistance, disobedience and revolt against the second.

"They have found, as it is said, self-styled doctors, theologians of great learning and great authority, who, by their consultations and counsels, have encouraged their resistance and revolt . . . Dear sons, if there are such doctors and theologians, they are theologians who have forgotten their whole duty to an authority which designated them for the respect and deference of the fathiful. But they are the masters of whom St. Paul says they have 'itching ears,' and of those who have listened to them what the same Apostle says is true: 'they turn their hearing away from the truth and betake themselves to fables.' And thus

these poor sons have allowed themselves to be drawn after real fables, fables of documents falsified, of documents burnt, fables of anti-patriotic plots, of anti-French plots, fables of a certain dream of the reconstitution of the Holy Roman Empire, fables in face of whose absurdity one must really repeat what the good St. Philip Neri said when he prayed God to hold His holy Hand on his head.

. . . . .

"And it is with the deepest sorrow of our fatherly heart that we think of the sorrow of these poor dear sons at the time, which is sure to come soon, when they will wake up and understand all the absurdity of this collection of lies which we have just recalled, and the striking contradiction between what they wish to be, that is to say good Catholics, and the attitude which they are in reality adopting. When that time comes may someone tell them that their sorrow has been our sorrow, and that no heart will have more indulgence for them than ours."

. . . . .

APPENDIX

WHY HAS THE *Action Française* BEEN CONDEMNED ?

(*From the Letter of Mgr. Ricard, Bishop of Nice, Sept. 14th, 1927.*)

" For the past year a sad affair has been troubling and dividing Catholic circles and thus weakening the opposition to unbelief and demoralisation. It is true that these difficulties do not stay the *élan* of religious and social apostolate which is our greatest hope, but the Church regrets that all her children do not consent to collaborate actively in this essential task, and that some, turned from their obedience by a blindness which is incomprehensible, devote themselves to an undertaking of which she has condemned, not only the principles but also the conduct and the results.

" A year after the condemnation of the *Action Française* we think it useful to invite you to cast a glance at the months that have passed and consider the work of misdirection wrought by its influence. This review will have, first, the effect of allowing us to judge the tree by its fruits, and to strengthen our feelings of gratitude to the Pope now reigning gloriously, who has liberated Catholic action from a tyrannical and deceitful enterprise, and further to work in us a renewal of light and zeal in leading

back to the true shepherd, with firmness and charity, those souls which in good faith remain insensible to his warnings, his appeals and his commands.

. . . . .

"The wish to work for the reorganisation of society and the vindication of the rights of the Church had drawn to this school of the *Action Française* men who, by their worth and devotion, seemed to have a marked place as the defenders of the twofold cause, religious and social, imperilled by contemporary persecution and errors. Fascinated and inspired by their language, they were unwilling to recognise that the leaders around whom they grouped themselves, remarkable it is said for their talent and certainly for their audacity, were, in the order of Christian faith and morals, insufficiently qualified and indeed disqualified (contre indiqués) to lead them, and that the ends, principles and methods proposed by such masters, the prolonged contact with them and daily co-operation in a common undertaking, ran a risk of producing an unlooked-for deviation of mind among the disciples.

"At a time when further delay appeared impossible, His Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop of Bordeaux said this, and the Sovereign Pontiff confirmed his decision with his high authority and fatherly goodness. The warning and the condemnation which followed it were denounced as an illegitimate and intolerable intrusion in a domain outside the Papal sphere, and revolt was regarded

as the necessary affirmation of French independence in national and international politics.

"And yet His Holiness Pius XI affirms, and does not cease to affirm, that his intervention was imposed upon his conscience solely by his sense of his responsibilities and from motives of a religious character. For us his august word was sufficient, but it was not sufficient for the neo-Catholics who do not think it their duty to put respect for the hierarchy in their programme of public life.

"Let no one misread our intention. We do not wish to renew the bleeding wound which is in many a heart. We simply wish to point out that its appeasement will not come from a silence which is the equivalent of a disavowal, to point out that the Holy Father must be obeyed, and above all to supply you with replies which will enable you in turn to refute errors and suspicions.

"Well, then, what are the motives which have inspired and dictated this condemnation?

"The Holy Father has intervened in the name of his doctrinal authority—

"(1) Because the *Action Française* is a school of which the creator, teacher and leader, M. Charles Maurras, claims to reconstitute the City—that is, the organism establishing and preserving social order—on ideas which are contrary to the Christian order: he has never made a systematic *exposé* of these ideas; they are found dispersed among different works, expressed not in definite theses, but in a style full of imagery and poetry, lit up sometimes by vivid phrases; linked together

logically they form a veritable ' religious, moral and social system ' (the Pope's description of them) which is definitely anti-Christian.

" (2) Because under the equivocal title of a ' political school ' which its adherents can only see as a party destined to restore the monarchy, the leader in reality looks to forming disciples of his own mind and methods grouped in leagues, and by them to diffuse, defend and realise a much larger political conception, the development and detailed applications of which flow from his naturalist-materialist-conception of man, of society, of religion and of the City.

" (3) Because he has presented the anti-Christian ideas which are at the base of his plans of construction to a public of *élite* under the veiled and attractive form of poetic myths, in books which have been described as ' reserved,' but which were recommended by the school and its journal, and which, since the war, have achieved a really large circulation. It is true that the author has out of prudence suppressed certain passages particularly wounding to Christians, but he has never retracted them, has underlined their importance by suggestive indications, and has reprinted them in an edition destined for book-lovers.

" (4) Because the master of the school, in order to rouse the minds and strengthen the action of his partisans, takes up again the same (underlying) ideas in a newspaper of popularisation, insinuates them in his daily articles in the course of critical and philosophical reflections on political events,

and spreads them among circles of young men and women who, attracted by the monarchist or patriotic political conclusions, are without weapons for repulsing the philosophic spirit in which these conclusions are bathed.

"(5) Because this is the very method of propaganda which, used by the encyclopædists in the eighteenth century, wrought havoc among the Catholic *élite* of France, and under colour of the reform of society and of the State, spread unbelief and contempt for the Christian revelation and the Gospel among the social classes, who continued to profess in words their respect for traditional religion whilst they renounced it with their mind and heart.

"(6) Because the recruiting of disciples, partisans, readers and sympathisers is done to a large extent in Catholic and even ecclesiastical circles, among whom the Pope has the right and the duty of telling them the ends towards which they are being led by their unbelieving and atheist leader, when he has impregnated and formed their mentality by his sophisms.

"(7) Because by believing the incessantly repeated affirmation that he alone is capable of assuring life, action and prosperity to the Church of France, the party formed round this school comes to identify the very cause of the Church with its own, to make the destinies of the Church of France part and parcel of its own destinies, to regard Catholics attached to other parties as incompletely Catholic, to discredit, from a religious

point of view, other groups which are very legitimately constituted, to pervert and in practice weaken the traditional teaching of the Church on her indifference to forms of government.

" (8) Because in the Maurrassian plan of the City, the Church, even if she can still give rules for the life of the individual, finds herself forbidden all authority over the social order, which is supposed to be ruled by immutable laws, collected and defined in a sort of ' physique des moeurs.' Thus the Church dreamed of by the *Action Française* would be a Church emptied of the Gospel, and, if his desires were realised, Maurras would have succeeded in the ' dechristianisation of Catholicism.' *

" (9) Because if the chiefs of this City propose to appeal to the Church whose benefit they proclaim, it is in order to ask her not only to serve the interests of the party, but also to ask her to ratify and support a new ' political, doctrinal and practical Modernism ' (the Pope's expression), issuing in a re-birth of pagan institutions.

" (10) Because, by the illusions it promotes and the errors it sows, the primacy given to political action—even in the mere order of execution—to secure social life and the defence of the Church, turns them aside from the true Christian conception of order and Christian apostolate, by subordinating moral to political reform.

" (11) Because the extreme nationalism charac-

* A phrase used by an unbelieving admirer of Maurras in an article in the *Mercure de France*, April 1st, 1927.

teristic of this school, which appears to seek only the exaltation of patriotism, does really (by its pretensions to a monopoly of clear-sightedness, its fierce criticism of every manifestation of peace, by its systematic opposition not only to 'French imprudence,' but to every effort of pacific organisation of international relations), issue in a blind cult of the nation, the negation of international justice, of a morality of nations superior to reasons of State, prepares minds to make, as rules of international relations, an extreme egoism productive of war, in place of Christian justice and charity, which are the makers of peace.

"(12) Because it is as a thinker that M. Maurras directed the school of *Action Française*, and it is around him as teacher having a plan of social reorganisation, forming part and function of an anti-Christian scheme, that our Catholics, and especially our youth, in quest of monarchist and patriotic directives, were coming to think and to act. It is this system of thought and the manifestations and realisations of it, which Pius XI has justly condemned."

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